



## *Coconino County Sheriff's Office*

*Bill Pribil, Sheriff*

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**  
**Date: December 8, 2009**

**Contact: Gerry Blair (928) 226-5089**  
**or Sgt. Aaron Dick (928) 890-7604**

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### ***Avalanche Hazards & Backcountry Safety Tips***

*Flagstaff, AZ-* The Coconino County Sheriff's Office and the Coconino National Forest are warning backcountry mountain travelers to be alert for potential avalanche hazards on the San Francisco Peaks. Due to recent heavy snowfall and high winds there have been reports of natural avalanche activity on the San Francisco Peaks. Hazardous avalanche conditions may exist on the San Francisco Peaks and may remain potentially hazardous for long periods. It is important for those recreating in the backcountry to be aware that no avalanche control is conducted in the backcountry outside of the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area. The Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area is not currently open for business so there are not any services being offered at this time. Check the Arizona Snowbowl website ([www.arizonasnowbowl.com](http://www.arizonasnowbowl.com)) for further information about the ski area.

People venturing into mountainous terrain should carry the "ten essentials" plus avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche rescue beacon, avalanche probe, and winter survival gear. Good wilderness navigation and route finding skills are essential. Be prepared for travel and emergencies in the remote winter mountain environment where rescue is not immediate. Do not travel alone and leave a detailed trip plan with a responsible person. It is important to review recent weather reports and forecasts as well as driving conditions prior to and during your trip. Carrying a cell phone is recommended, however, it may not always work in backcountry locations and should not substitute for good judgment and preparation. It is recommended that people who use the mountain backcountry receive formal avalanche safety education and winter survival skills. Free avalanche awareness clinics are offered by the Kachina Peaks Avalanche Center. More information about these clinics can be found at [www.kachinapeaks.org](http://www.kachinapeaks.org).

Winter backcountry travel into the Kachina Peaks Wilderness Area from Arizona Snowbowl requires a free annual backcountry permit when the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area is open for business. This includes the parking areas at FR 522 and Lamar Haines Wildlife Area. Backcountry permits are available in Flagstaff at the Peaks Ranger Station, 5075 N. Highway 89, and the Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office, 1824 S Thompson St. Permits will also be available at Arizona Snowbowl's Agassiz Lodge weekend mornings once the ski area opens.

#### **Ten Essentials:**

1. Water
2. Food



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3. Extra Warm Clothing
4. Map, Compass, GPS
5. Headlamp/Flashlight
6. First Aid Kit
7. Shelter Material/Space Blanket
8. Fire Starting Kit/Waterproof Matches
9. Pocket Knife/Multi-tool
10. Whistle/Signal Mirror

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